

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., said today, "President Bush said he was going to launch a full investigation into what happened with regard to the failed rescue and relief efforts after Katrina hit Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He wants to know what was done right and what was done wrong so we will be better prepared in the future in case of a terrorist attack with weapons of mass destruction or another major natural disaster. He said it was important to understand the relationship between the federal, state and local governments when it comes to a major catastrophe.

"I couldn't agree more, but the problem is President Bush already has an ideological commitment to state-centered federalism and against a point of view that would help to build a more perfect Union. President Bush already thinks he knows what the relationship is between the federal, state and local governments. He has a philosophical commitment to states' rights. It's why Ronald Reagan said the federal government was the problem, not a solution. It's why the Republican Party has been leading a crusade on behalf of an evolution of devolution of the federal government. It's why conservatives have been attacking the federal courts and so-called 'activist judges.' It's what candidate George W. Bush meant when he said that his two favorite Supreme Court Justices were Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. It's why he's nominated Judge John Roberts, first to the Supreme Court and now to become the Chief Justice. All of these efforts are designed to weaken the role of the federal government in any attempt to build ***a more perfect Union for all Americans***

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"Katrina has unraveled and revealed the American myth of prosperity for all of our citizens. The **federal** government is being exposed and embarrassed before the whole world. The Bush question - of the role of the federal and state governments - should have been settled during the American Civil War. But it's at the center of our current discussions about education and health care - i.e., how do we provide a public education and health care of equal high quality for **every** American?"

"The truth is that Hurricane Katrina exposed the neglected realities of poverty and race in this nation. This disaster has trapped the poor as a class and African Americans as a caste - both of which reflect past failures of the federal government and inadequacies within the states, what one might call *institutional catastrophes*

- in a debate over the role of the federal government and the states in the Gulf region of our country.

The poverty and lingering racism that we see are not natural disasters but man-made disasters,

the result of the failure of the federal government to take the necessary and appropriate action to end poverty and discrimination in the richest nation on earth. Yet the President's adherence to state-centered federalism, which weakens the Union and the federal government's ability to address such issues, will only perpetuate the central problem of how to build a more perfect Union into the future," Jackson concluded.